Epistemic Conditions on "Ought": E=K as a Case Study

0. Introduction

John Gibbons claims that there is a "natural reaction" to the general idea that one can be normatively required to Ø when that requirement is in some sense outside of one's first person perspective or inaccessible to one (Gibbons 2013).[1] Discussing a case in which an agent has perfectly good but misleading evidence that their keys are right now on their kitchen table, Gibbons says:

> What I call the natural reaction to the idea that you ought to believe when the keys are there and withhold when they're not [despite what your good evidence tells you] is pretty much the same reaction that I have when people tell me that you ought to jump out the window of your hotel when you have no way of knowing about the fire in the basement (Gibbons 2013, p.161).

The reaction amounts to the claim that this isn't possible. Given what it is to be normatively required to Ø, one cannot be normatively required to Ø when that requirement is in some sense outside of one's first person perspective or inaccessible to one. To assess this claim, we need a view about the relationship between agents' capacities to accord with normative requirements and the conditions under which those normative requirements obtain.[2] In this paper, I offer a view of the epistemic dimension of this relationship.[3] One goal is to provide enough of a story about the natural reaction to make accounting for it look like an important thing to do. That said, by "accounting for it" I do not mean endorsing the natural reaction. This would be *one* way to account for it. Another would be to explain it away. The main goal, then, is not to defend the claims implicit in the natural reaction, but to clarify and make them more precise so they can be more readily evaluated.

To focus the discussion, I will use Timothy Williamson's "E=K" view of evidence as an example of a view in epistemology that generates the natural reaction. An upshot of the discussion, then, is a detailed account of (what many take to be) a troubling feature of Williamson's influential but controversial view of evidence. But I intend the results of the discussion to be relevant for any view with normative implications. Williamson supports E=K with a good deal of compelling argument. Moreover, he has general reasons for thinking that the epistemic implications of his view are *inevitable*—that is, that there can be no view about evidence (or anything, for that matter) that does not come with these epistemic implications.[4] Williamson would point out, then, that these implications do not count against *his* view in particular. In light of all this, claiming that there is a natural reaction to E=K may seem pretty insignificant. Indeed, claiming that there is a natural reaction to any view is in itself of little dialectical significance. But if enough people have the reaction—and I agree with Gibbons that many people do—then it needs to be accounted for. That is, if not endorsed then it should be explained away. So I want to give a more precise account of what needs to be endorsed or explained away. The more compelling these ideas are, the harder it will be to explain them away. To put it another way, the *weaker* the commitments behind the natural reaction turn out to be, the harder they will be to explain away. If there are strong

[1] Gibbons' main concern is with what he calls "the ethicists' notion of *objective* reasons" (Gibbons 2013, Ch.1).
[2] We also need a clear statement of what "normative requirements" are. I explain what I mean in Section One.
[3] As opposed to, say, the psychological or metaphysical dimensions of this relationship.
[4] I am referring to Williamson's "anti-luminosity" argument (Williamson 2000).

considerations in support of a view that generates the natural reaction, this doesn't yet count against the reaction, it merely generates a puzzle.

The plan is as follows. In Section One, I address some preliminaries concerning the notion of normative requirements I have in mind in this paper. In Section Two, I introduce E=K and briefly explain why it generates the natural reaction. In Sections Three and Four, I use the view as a case study for investigating some preliminary accounts of the commitments underlying the natural reaction. In Sections Five to Eight, I take the shortcomings of the preliminary accounts to motivate a new account. The considered view I end up with turns on a finer-grained conception of responsibility than is often considered in this context. I argue that there is a crucial connection ("crucial" in a sense to be spelled out below) between "attributability" and normative requirements, and that there is an epistemic condition on attributability (Sections Five, Six and Seven). Taken together, these arguments give us an account of the epistemic conditions on normative requirements. I call the resulting view the Attributability View (Section Eight). I claim that one can account for the natural reaction by either endorsing the Attributability View or explaining away its intuitive plausibility.

1. Normative Requirements

I use the term "normative requirements" to isolate a narrower notion of normativity than is sometimes at issue in discussions about normativity and epistemic normativity in particular (Greco 2010; Sosa 2007; 2011). We can speak of the "normative" broadly in contrast with the "descriptive", but we can also speak of the "normative" more narrowly in contrast with the "evaluative". For example, moral philosophers distinguish between judgments about what one is *required,* or *obligated,* or has a *duty,* or *ought* to do on the one hand, and judgments about what would be *good* or *best* on the other. In this paper I reserve the notion of "normativity" for claims about what one *ought* to do as opposed to what would be good or best. As is widely accepted, however, "ought" is itself ambiguous, or at least polysemous, in a variety of ways.[5] So I need to be more specific.

Consider some examples. It's easy to imagine a context in which it would be natural to read the following as an "ought" of obligation or duty or requirement (and thus something paradigmatically normative):

a) You ought to stop eating animals.

But consider another instance of "ought":

b) They ought to be here by now.

This is not naturally read as stating an obligation, duty, or requirement. Indeed, b) is referred to as the "epistemic" or "predictive ought". It has to do with what is likely or probable given our evidence (roughly speaking). At the very least, then, I might stipulate that I'm interested in the "ought" of obligation—that is, the one in example a). But even the notion of obligation is at least apparently ambiguous. For example, Michael Zimmerman (2008) distinguishes between "binding" and "non-binding" obligations. Consider the following:

[5] See Chrisman *forthcoming.*

c) Milton you ought to be living at this hour (as England needs you!).[6]

This is an example of what Zimmerman would call an "ought" of non-binding obligation. It is also referred to as the "evaluative ought". It evaluates some state of affairs relative to a given standard. In other words, it is one way of saying that it would be good or perhaps even best if Milton were alive (say, relative to standards of what would be morally and politically good for England). Meanwhile, I follow Zimmerman in saying that *binding* (moral) obligations settle the question of what a morally conscientious person ought to do in a given situation. In what follows, a generalized form of this latter notion (taken to include the epistemic domain, for example) is what I mean to isolate with my term "normative requirements". In this paper I am interested in *epistemic* normativity, and not just moral normativity. It is of course controversial whether epistemic normativity should to be modeled on moral normativity in this way. However, I am less interested in *whether* epistemic normativity should to be understood this way, than in what the *implications* are of so understanding it. For those who think differently about epistemic normativity, the following discussion can be seen as material for drawing out potentially undesirable implications of an opponents' way of thinking about epistemic normativity.

One final important preliminary point. A widely endorsed idea is that there is a further ambiguity between *objective* and *subjective* senses of "obligation". It might be said of Gibbons' case above, for example, that the person has an *objective* obligation to jump out the window, while they do not have a *subjective* obligation to do so. The difference between these two senses is helpfully articulated in epistemic terms. On one hand, we can be objectively obligated to do that which is in some sense outside our first person perspective, or epistemically inaccessible to us. On the other hand, what we are subjectively obligated to do is always within our first person perspective and accessible to us. Insofar as this paper is *about* epistemic conditions on "ought", one way of thinking about its argument is as an argument against positing this sort of ambiguity. In other words, it explains why someone might think there *is* no "objective" sense of "normative requirement".[7] The natural reaction is a reaction to that very idea.

2. E=K and the Natural Reaction

Williamson starts with the idea of a body of evidence. Agents draw on a body of evidence in evaluating hypotheses and updating their beliefs about the world around them. His thesis is that *p* belongs to an agent's body of evidence if and only if the agent *knows* that *p*. One's total evidence is equal to one's total knowledge, or E=K. This thesis about evidence partly motivates, and is partly motivated by, Williamson's broader "knowledge first" epistemology. Those details can be put to one side here. Williamson provides multiple arguments from the *function* of evidence that work independently of the knowledge first programme.

We can see what I'm interested in about Williamson's view most readily by considering two things. First, consider the following normative requirement:

EVIDENTIAL NORM: Agents ought to proportion their beliefs to the evidence.

[6] The example is borrowed from Chrisman (*forthcoming*), who borrows it from Wedgwood (2007), but it comes from Wordsworth's sonnet "London, 1802".
[7] It's important to keep the stipulated senses of these terms in mind when reading the above sentence.

What it means exactly takes some careful spelling out.[8] But I'm focusing on a very general and rough idea—the idea that agents are subject to a normative requirement concerning how their beliefs are proportioned to the evidence they have. Next, consider the classic "brain in a vat" (BIV) scenario. In a distant possible world, unbeknownst to you, your brain has been removed from your skull and put in a vat. In the vat, your brain is stimulated by a supercomputer such that everything you experience is phenomenologically identical to the actual world. So you continue to believe, for example, that you have hands. Of course, as a mere brain in a vat you no longer have hands. The point is the following. Given that your evidence is, and only is, what you *know* according to E=K, your evidence does *not* include the proposition expressed by the sentence "I have hands". Thus, in believing with complete conviction that you have hands (as you would), you fail to proportion your beliefs correctly to the evidence. You violate the evidential norm. Williamson will be the first to claim that you have a perfectly good *excuse* for believing that you have hands. In that respect, your belief is not a complete normative failing. But it remains true—as Williamson would put it—that your belief does not have the "full normative status" it would have were it correctly proportioned to the evidence. I return to the issue of excuses in a few places below.

In general, because knowledge has an important *externalist* component(s)—at the very least, knowledge is factive—you can fail to be in a position to know whether you know that *p*. But given E=K and the evidential norm, this just means that you can fail to be in a position to know that you are normatively required to believe that *p*—which is of course a specific instance of the idea that you can be normatively required to Ø when this is in some sense outside your first person perspective or inaccessible to you. And *that* idea is what Gibbons claims generates the natural reaction. So, Williamson's view of evidence is a view in epistemology that generates the natural reaction.

3. Deliberation-Guidance

I turn now to some different approaches to spelling out the commitments underlying the natural reaction. The first approach starts by noting the following. We use evidence in our deliberations about what to believe, and thus indirectly in our deliberations about what to do. For example, when thinking about whether you stole my bike or not, I consider what evidence I have in support of thinking this. This is a good example because a lot hangs on something like accusing someone of stealing my bike. And it's often the case that a lot hangs on what one believes given their evidence. We might wonder, then, whether the sort of opacity of our evidence on Williamson's view has counterintuitive consequences in light of this important function of evidence. Williamson recognizes this: "How can one follow the rule 'proportion your belief in *p* to your evidence for *p*' when one doesn't know exactly what one's evidence is?" (Williamson 2000, p.192). I will call this the "deliberation-guidance" worry.

[8] According to Williamson, the requirements of rationality tell you to proportion your beliefs to the evidence. "If rationality requires one to respect one's evidence, then it is irrational not to respect one's evidence" (Williamson 2000, Ch.8). This is a normative requirement. Although the details are complex, the basic idea is that your degree of confidence that *p* ought to be proportioned to the probability that *p* given your evidence. If the probability that *p* given your evidence is 1, then you ought, for example, simply outright believe that *p* (believe to a degree of confidence of 1). If the probability that *p* given your evidence is less than 1, then you ought to have something less than outright belief that *p*. Perhaps you ought to believe that *p* is probable to *n* degrees, or perhaps you ought to have some distinct propositional attitude that is in some sense less committal about the fact that *p* – the details are unimportant here.

The deliberation-guidance worry can be sharpened in the following way. Call a norm "operationalizable" just in case, "if one knows the norm, one is always able to use the norm as a premise in a competent deduction, together with one's knowledge of whether the norm's triggering condition obtains, to come to know whether one is acting in conformity with the norm" (Srinivasan *unpublished*, p.11).[9] For example, the norm "One ought to proportion one's beliefs to the evidence" is operationalizable just in case one can use it in a competent deduction, together with their knowledge that they now have evidence E and degree of credence C on E, to come to know whether they believe in conformity with the norm. The idea is that such knowledge is necessary for being "guided" by a norm. One must be able to know whether one is acting in accord with the norm or not in order to properly be counted as being guided by the norm. Without such knowledge, the deliberation-guidance worry goes, one's accordance with a norm is at best a sort of accident—in which case it's questionable that one deserves a normative status for believing in accordance with the norm. So the problem with Williamson's view, according to this worry, is that it renders the evidential norm "unoperationalizable."

How serious is the deliberation-guidance worry? On one hand, Williamson argues that the opacity of our evidence, on his view, is not extensive enough to give this concern any bite. He says: "Although we have no infallible procedure for determining whether we know *p,* in practice we are often in a position to know whether we know *p*" (Williamson 2000, p.193). The point is that the fact that we are "often" in a position to know whether we know p is enough to dismiss the deliberation-guidance worry. While it might be true that we could not use our evidence to guide deliberation (and indirectly action) if we were *never* in a position to know what our evidence is, this doesn't entail that we cannot use our evidence to guide deliberation given that we are often (though not *always*) in a position to know what our evidence is. Compare the following example from Srinivasan:

> SEDER NORM: When setting the table for Passover, one ought to set as many places as there will be Seder guests plus one.

Srinivasan notes that, while it's true that one is not always in a position to know how many guests one will have at one's Passover Seder (there may be unexpected arrivals, or someone might get sick), we can clearly employ such a norm in our reasoning about what to do at Passover. It seems a stretch to call it a mere *accident* when we get the number of places right, even though we aren't always in a position to know how many guests there will be. Norms can guide us even if we're not always in a position to know what they tell us to do.

This seems fair enough.[10] One might insist that "None of this would be much consolation if our beliefs about our knowledge were hopelessly unreliable. Sceptics say that those beliefs have no rational basis..." (Williamson 2000, p.193). If scepticism is true, then it is simply *false* that we are often (even if not always) in a position to know what our evidence is (given E=K). But rather than pursuing that issue any

[9] Here is Srinivasan's explanation of her own terminology: "A norm is a universal generalisation about how one ought to conduct one's practical or doxastic affairs, involving a normative state N and a triggering condition C, of the form "N if/and/only if C" (Srinivasan *unpublished*, p.6). We can think of Srinivasan's phrase "triggering condition" as meaning the condition under which an agent counts as being in a normative state.

[10] One might insist that a fuller version of this sort of response provides a principled answer to the question: "*how* often is often enough?" I won't pursue this here.

further—it seems fair to assume the falsity of scepticism in the present context—it will be instructive to pursue a deeper issue.[11]

4. Blameworthiness

It is plausible that what is behind the deliberation-guidance worry is a deeper worry about the idea that one could *ever* be normatively required to Ø when one is not in a position to know that one is required to Ø.[12] Srinivasan suggests that what lies behind such a worry is a desire to align the "deontological" and "hypological" perspectives (Srinivasan, p.14). The deontological perspective is the perspective from which we make judgments about whether an agent conforms to normative requirements – i.e. their binding obligations, duties, what they ought to do or think, etc. The hypological perspective is the perspective from which we make judgments about whether an agent is blameworthy or praiseworthy for their actions or attitudes. One reason we might think that these perspectives should be aligned is if we think that judgments of blameworthiness and praiseworthiness are in some sense central to the very idea of normative requirements. Indeed, the thought goes, we might think that they are so central that it's difficult to understand the possibility of a mismatch between the conditions under which someone is blameworthy and the conditions under which they count as violating a normative requirement. Whether one is blameworthy intuitively depends on whether they are in a position to know that the conditions under which they would be blameworthy obtain (Williamson would agree, as we can see from his appeal to *excuses*).[13] Thus, allowing that one might *ever* violate a norm when one is not in a position to know that its triggering conditions obtain effectively introduces a mismatch between conditions of blameworthiness and conditions of norm-violation. And so, on the present assumption, it is to misplace something central about normativity. We can sharpen the idea that blameworthiness is "central" to normativity in the following way. Call it the "hypological principle" (H):

> (H): S ought to Ø only if, if S doesn't Ø, then S is blameworthy for not Ø-ing.

The principle says that it's only true that S is normatively required to Ø if, were they not to Ø, they would be blameworthy for not Ø-ing. A good way to see this principle in action is to consider the following case:

> Suppose Kate, a generally thoughtful person, brings some soup to her friend Mary, who is down with the flu. And suppose further that Kate isn't in a position to know that the soup contains an allergen that, rather than making Mary feel better, will make her more ill. In trying her best to help her friend, Kate inadvertently makes her friend worse off (Srinivasan, p.15).

Intuitively, Kate is not blameworthy for making her friend worse off.[14] But notice that Kate violates the normative requirements of at least some possible normative theories. For example, to put it roughly, if we assume that Kate only had the choice of either giving Mary the soup or not, and that Kate's giving Mary

[11] Srinivasan points out a second objection to the deliberation-guidance worry. This is that the deliberation-guidance worry seems to presuppose that our practical and cognitive lives, when they go well, are a rule-governed affair. That is, it seems to presuppose that well-lived practical and cognitive lives involve actively applying general rules to specific cases. She notes that there are many reasons to think that is an implausible (Srinivasan *unpublished,* p.13).
[12] As opposed to a worry about whether we are *often enough* in the relevant position to know.
[13] See footnote 15 for brief further discussion on why this is plausible.
[14] To make this even more plausible, imagine that Kate was very cautious in checking all the allergens and that she asked Mary about her allergies.

the soup reduces the overall good, then Kate violates a consequentialist norm of action that says: "One ought to Ø iff Ø-ing would maximise the good". But according to (H), the following claim is true:

> Kate ought to maximize the good only if, if Kate doesn't maximize the good, then Kate is blameworthy for not maximizing the good.

Because Kate is intuitively not to blame for not maximizing the good here, (H) tells us that it's false that she really *ought* to have done so—i.e. it's false that she violated a normative requirement in bringing Mary the soup. Thus, the consequentialist norm is false according to the (H) principle. We can see how this is relevant to E=K by considering the BIV case. As virtually everyone agrees (including Williamson), the BIV is not blameworthy for falsely believing that she has hands. But of course, if E=K is true, then by believing that she has hands the BIV violates the evidential norm. She fails to proportion her beliefs to the evidence because she fails to proportion her beliefs to what she knows. But according to (H), the following claim is true:

> S ought to proportion her beliefs to what she knows only if, if S doesn't proportion her beliefs to what she knows, then S is blameworthy for not proportioning her beliefs to what she knows.

(H) tells us that it's false that she really *ought* to have proportioned her belief to what she knows. E=K conflicts with the (H) principle. The account of course extends beyond BIV cases. Any case in which an agent is not blameworthy, according to the (H) principle, will fail to be a case in which a normative requirement has been violated. Insofar as we find it plausible that agents are generally not blameworthy for Ø-ing when they are not in a position to know that they are Ø-ing, the (H) principle delivers an epistemic condition on normative requirements.[15] It tells us that people cannot be normatively required to Ø when they are not in a position to know that they are normatively required to Ø. The (H) principle is thus a candidate for being at least one of the basic commitments underlying the natural reaction.

Why think that blameworthiness is central to normativity, or in other words that (H) is true? It's interesting that Srinivasan, the person to whom this diagnosis of the natural reaction is due, doesn't provide much of an explanation for why we might think this in the first place. Rather, her suggestion is accompanied by claims such as: "The hypological perspective has a strong grip on contemporary normative philosophy, and perhaps contemporary culture more generally. Perhaps this is a result both of overconfidence in our theoretical powers and naïveté about the place of luck in human life" (Srinivasan *unpublished*, p. 34). Srinivasan's aim in introducing this diagnosis is to challenge the natural reaction. The following is worth quoting in full:

[15] There is wide agreement about the epistemic dimension of *blame,* though this is of course a complicated issue. I touch on one dimension of this complexity in Section Six. In any case, one reason we might think that blameworthiness gives rise to general considerations about access has to do with the intuitive incompatibility of judgments of blameworthiness with what Williams (1976, 1981) and Nagel (1979) call "moral luck" or "resultant luck" (respectively). The Kate and Mary case is an example of "bad resultant luck." As Srinivasan puts it, "this form of luck is present when one's ignorance of the relevant circumstantial facts prohibits one from controlling the outcome or result of one's actions" (Srinivasan *unpublished*, p.15). Kate is not blameworthy for what she's done to Mary, and an issue about luck, which is perhaps best understood in terms of an issue about epistemic access, seems like precisely the relevant feature of the case. That is, the best explanation for why she is not to blame is that she was not in a position to know that the soup contains the allergen. Such reflections on resultant luck highlight the plausibility of an accessibility condition on blameworthiness.

> Consider a political leader who, doing his best to act on his evidence and follow his conscience, leads his country into an illegal, immoral and materially devastating war. That he is in some sense excused for so doing is and should be of little interest to those who are not his biographer. Indeed, a first personal fixation on one's own culpability seems to indulge a narcissism deeply at odds with the normative. It is fine and important to tell children that all that matters is that they try their best. But when this thought becomes a complete consolation for failure – when I, harming you, care only that I am trying my best not to – I have abandoned the deontological perspective. Williams launches a similar criticism against the Christian outlook when he says that it "associates morality simultaneously with benevolence, self-denial, and inner directedness or guilt (shame before God or oneself)" [(Williams 1981, p. 244)]. Seeking to avoid blame, moral or epistemic, is a form of cowardice, a turning inward of the normative perspective (Srinivasan unpublished, p.34).

Ultimately, I am sympathetic to these remarks. They pose a problem for aligning the deontological and hypological perspectives. For example, the case of the political leader seems like a counterexample to (H). The claim that

> S ought not to have led his country into an illegal, immoral and materially devastating war only if, if S did so, then S is blameworthy for leading his country into an illegal, immoral and materially devastating war

seems false.[16] But there are more significant worries. For example, (H) seems to render excuses *impossible*. One way of putting what (H) says is that the presence of an excusing condition serves to undermine the judgment that a normative requirement has been violated. On this view, having an excuse just means that one's action or attitude fails to violate the relevant norm(s). But this just means that there can be no cases of excused norm violation. And if there can be no such cases, it is hard to imagine any cases of an excused action or attitude. Needless to say, this doesn't fit well with our actual practices of holding people responsible for their actions and attitudes. We excuse people all the time.

While I agree with Srinivasan that (H) is implausible, I don't take this in itself to diffuse the natural reaction.[17] We should look elsewhere for a view of the commitments underlying the natural reaction. The guiding idea in the rest of this paper is that a way forward can be found in a finer-grained account of *responsibility*. To be sure, blameworthiness and praiseworthiness are obviously closely connected to responsibility. So we might think that the view that blameworthiness is central to normativity just is the view that responsibility is central to normativity. But there are at least three different notions of responsibility relevant to our purposes. Examining the differences between these notions will allow us to

[16] However, the details are complicated. For example, it is important to keep some things in mind about blameworthiness before doing away with (H). It is important to note, first, that (H) doesn't imply that violation of normative requirements goes hand in hand with the appropriateness of *blame.* There are important differences between the conditions of the appropriateness of blaming someone, and the conditions *blameworthiness.* For one thing, blaming is highly positional in nature—for example, being implicated in the wrongdoing of some other agent can place constraints on the appropriateness of one blaming that agent. Meanwhile, while blameworthiness is also considered by some to be to a certain degree positional in nature, it is arguably less so (Kelly 2013). And we might think that since violating normative requirements is not a positional matter, the idea that there is some essential connection between blameworthiness and norm violation is at least more plausible than the idea that there is some essential connection between the appropriateness of actual blame responses and norm violation.

[17] Srinivasan doesn't herself formulate the desire to align the deontological and hypological perspectives in terms of the (H) principle. That is something I've taken the liberty of doing here.

see in more detail why (H) is implausible. Moreover, a picture will emerge that provides a more plausible, though closely related, way of spelling out the natural reaction—one that can accommodate cases like the political leader case, and avoid the unpalatable upshot of making excuses impossible.

5. Responsibility

An influential idea in contemporary moral philosophy is to understand responsibility broadly in terms of being open to a particular range of moral responses. Peter Strawson's seminal "Freedom and Resentment" (1962) focused on reactive attitudes such as gratitude, guilt, indignation and resentment. Recent work due to Tim Scanlon (1998; 2008) and Angela Smith (2005; 2012) broadly continues this approach, but with a subtler view of the types of moral responses that are relevant to responsibility. One of the primary motivations for Scanlon's and Smith's views about responsibility is that they can account for a comprehensive range of moral responses involved in our moral practices. For example, contrasting her view with what she calls *volitional* views of responsibility, Smith claims that she can more readily account for our practices of holding each other responsible for attitudes and actions over which it seems we have no immediate voluntary control (like forgetting one's best friend's birthday, or failing to *notice* something).

I am interested in a criticism of the Scanlon/Smith view due to David Shoemaker (2011).[18] Shoemaker is sympathetic to the general approach. But he argues it isn't comprehensive enough. In particular, he thinks we need a finer-grained view that, while taking the basic picture as a starting point, distinguishes between three types of responsibility: *attributability, answerability,* and *accountability.* I am particularly interested in Shoemaker's claim that "accountability" is something distinct from "attributability". I am interested because, according to Shoemaker (and others),[19] attributability is a form of responsibility that comes apart from *blameworthiness*. According to Shoemaker, blameworthiness is tied to accountability, but not attributability. Before getting into his argument, it will be helpful to explain the Scanlon/Smith view briefly.

It is helpful to articulate the view by starting with the idea that being responsible for an action or attitude implies a special kind of activity. This is why we do not hold each other morally responsible for our heights, and why we do not hold avalanches morally responsible for destroying villages. A key desideratum for any theory of responsibility is accounting for the intuitive idea that responsibility for actions and attitudes implies a special kind of activity. Volitional views, for example, account for this in terms of choice, decision, or voluntary control.[20] An agent is responsible for Φ-ing only if the agent made/is able to make some kind of past, present or future choice concerning Φ-ing. Rather than

[18] In what follows I speak of the "Scanlon/Smith view", but I do not mean to suggest by this terminology that Scanlon and Smith have collaborated or explicitly endorse each other's views on responsibility (though this happens to be true of Smith, at least). I use this terminology simply to engage with Shoemaker, who groups the two together as representatives of *broadly* the same sort of view about responsibility (for my purposes, the relevant thing shared between them is understanding responsibility in terms of an agent's being open to a certain range of moral responses).

[19] See Watson (2011).

[20] As Smith notes, the "volitional" view is a loose cluster of views with important differences. Roughly, they share a commitment to the idea that choice, decision or voluntary control is central to responsibility. Smith briefly points out differences between "prior choice" views, "endorsement" views, and "voluntary control" views. See Smith (2005), p. 240).

accounting for the activity involved in responsible actions and attitudes in these terms, the Smith/Scanlon view focuses on what Smith calls *rational activity.* Smith calls her view of responsibility the "rational relations" view.

As moral agents, we each have a set of "evaluative commitments." Evaluative commitments are not always, or even very often, consciously held propositional beliefs. Rather, according Smith, they are tendencies to treat certain things as having evaluative significance. As such, they are often things we discover about ourselves through our responses to situations, as opposed to things we consciously choose. To use Smith's example, "I may discover in some situation that I care more about being liked by others than I do about standing up for my moral principles" (Smith 2005, p. 252). On the rational relations view, our evaluative commitments—"the basic evaluative framework through which we view the world"—are the core of what makes us open to moral assessment for our actions and attitudes. This is because, according to the view, moral assessment of a person's actions or attitudes is a kind of demand that that person "acknowledge and defend or disavow the judgments that are implicit in her responses to the world around her" (Smith 2005, p.256). Evaluative commitments are susceptible to the sort of critical reflection and requests for justification implicit in our practice of moral assessment. As such, on the rational relations view, a person's evaluative commitments (rather than their conscious choices, or what they identify with, or what they have voluntary control over) are the seat of their status as a responsible agent. But how does this tell us anything about our responsibility for particular actions and attitudes, such as my belief that the U.S needs more gun control, or my fear of flying?

The idea is that our particular actions and attitudes stand in a *rational relation* to our evaluative commitments. That is to say, most of the time, our actions and attitudes rationally follow from, or *fail* to follow from, our evaluative commitments (Smith 2005). For example, if I judge that flying is perfectly safe, but do everything in my power to avoid flying when flying is something I need to do, very roughly we might say that my acts of avoiding flying fail to follow from my judgment that flying is perfectly safe. As Smith puts it, the relation is a normative one: given what my judgments about flying are, other things being equal, I should not be avoiding it at all costs. The fact that we usually call this kind of behavior *ir*rational is one way of bringing out the general idea of a rational connection between particular attitudes or actions and an agent's evaluative commitments.

But importantly, we hold each other morally responsible precisely in virtue of *substantive* critical engagement with our evaluative commitments. For example, take Jim's attitude of hatred towards Indigenous Canadians. According to the rational relations view, Jim's hatred of Indigenous Canadians is open to moral assessment, not because it is freely chosen, or because it is something he "identifies" with, or because it is something under his voluntary control (though all of these things may be true); rather, Jim's hatred is open to moral assessment because it stands in a direct rational relation to his evaluative commitments: for example, we can imagine that (whether he knows it or not) Jim thinks that a person's worth is determined by their intelligence, and that a person's intelligence is determined by their race. These evaluative judgments are substantively mistaken. Jim is thus open to moral criticism, not just for these evaluative commitments, but for the actions and attitudes that are rationally connected to them.

In sum, according to Smith, we are responsible for our actions and attitudes precisely in virtue of (and only in virtue of) the fact that they bear a rational connection to our evaluative commitments. When someone Φs, they can in principle be called upon to justify the particular evaluative commitments that

their Φ-ing implies. The main point here is that this is how the view accounts for the intuitive idea that responsibility requires a certain kind of activity. It requires the in-principle capacity to reflect upon and justify one's evaluative commitments. It is a view that fits within the Strawsonian picture of thinking of moral responsibility in terms of being open to a certain range of moral responses. It is also a view that contains important theoretical resources that I will expand on below.

It is worth emphasizing that one of the primary motivations for the Scanlon/Smith view of responsibility is that it can account for a comprehensive range of moral responses involved in our moral practices. For example, again contrasting the view with the volitional view of responsibility, it is a familiar feature of our moral practices that people are open to moral assessment for their impulses and spontaneous reactions—indeed, we often take a person's spontaneous reactions to reveal *deeper* moral features of them than the considered and controlled behavior they manifest. And while volitional views of responsibility have a hard time accounting for this, the Scanlon/Smith view is poised to do so. This makes the view interesting in the context of epistemology. After all, our beliefs are not typically under voluntary control. And if we are responsible for our beliefs in the way implied, for example, by the EVIDENTIAL NORM, then it seems we had better have an account of responsibility for belief that does not imply that our beliefs are under voluntary control. The rational relations view is well-suited to provide an account of responsibility for belief in this respect.

6. Attributability

All of this said, I am interested in Shoemaker's argument that the rational relations view is not comprehensive enough. On one hand, he argues that the implication of the view that responsibility is connected in-principle to the agent's ability to justify their evaluative commitments is too strong. He distinguishes between *answerability* (a notion of responsibility that entails the ability to justify) and mere *attributability* (a notion of responsibility that does not entail the ability to justify). An action or attitude is *merely* attributable to an agent if it in some sense *expresses* the agent's evaluative commitments, where the agent cannot reasonably be expected to *justify* anything.[21] (Importantly, Smith uses the language of *attributability* to mark out her basic notion of responsibility, and I will continue to use it as such as well. Indeed, as Shoemaker himself points out, his dispute with Smith at this stage concerns what is necessary for attributability. He thinks it is something weaker than answerability. In any case, this is why I sometimes refer to Shoemaker's notion of attributability as *mere* attributability. But this dispute is not my focus here).

Shoemaker also argues that we need a distinction between attributability and *accountability.* To get a sense of his argument, we can start with two cases.

[21] Shoemaker appeals to cases of arational *caring,* such as a mother's continuing care for her son who has turned into a serial killer (to take an extreme example), or a person's pining for their abusive ex-lover. He suggests that this sort of caring is something the agent has, merely in virtue of standing in a sort of "mine-ness" relation to something or someone, and that requesting reasons in justification for one's care would be pointless. The sort of moral responses that Shoemaker thinks justifies referring to mere attributability as a genuine kind of responsibility are what he calls *aretaic assessments.* For example, we think of the mother as loyal, or "generous to a fault", in caring for her son. Aretaic assessments are genuinely moral responses, Shoemaker argues, insofar as they have significant practical upshots when deciding who to make plans with, associate with, "who to work on loving more", and so on (Shoemaker 2011, p.615).

> ANNIVERSARY: George and Martha have been married for several years. Each year as their anniversary approaches, Martha drops subtle but increasingly forceful hints about the sort of gift she would greatly appreciate for their anniversary. These should merely be hints, she thinks, because were she to have to tell George explicitly what she wants and where to get it, his gesture would be less a gift than an errand. Unfortunately, each year George misses the hint and buys her some carnations, her least favorite flower. After the tenth year this happens, Martha gives up, deeply disappointed in George. The next year she accepts the carnations with as much feigned enthusiasm as she can muster, but she is no longer disposed to be as chipper about their anniversary or certain ceremonial aspects of it, nor is she disposed to pay as much attention to George's hints about what he would like for various holidays.
>
> CHEATING: George and Martha have been married for several years. One evening, while George is taking a shower, Martha answers his cell phone, but the caller immediately hangs up. She notices that George has received many calls from this particular number recently, and she then discovers a texting thread from this number, along with texting threads from many other numbers. The texts leave no doubt that George has been having multiple affairs. When confronted with this evidence, George initially denies it but then gives in and admits it. Martha is furious, and she reaches for the closest object she can find to swing at George. It is a golf club, which he successfully dodges. He runs for the car.
>
> (Shoemaker 2011, p.620)

These cases exhibit two very different kinds of moral response. What explains the appropriateness of this difference? Shoemaker's explanation is that two very different kinds of *standards* in George and Martha's marriage are flouted in each case. We can call the standards flouted in ANNIVERSARY, "standards of aspiration". These define what George and Martha can *hope* for from each other as a married couple. They "spell out the range of potential for the relationship, determining what would enable the relationship to flourish" (Shoemaker 2012, p. 621). We can call the standards flouted in CHEATING, "standards of permission".[22] These define what George and Martha can *expect* and *demand* from each other as a married couple. They are conditions the following of which makes the relationship possible. Shoemaker calls them "relationship-defining demands" (Shoemaker 2011, p.621).

Shoemaker's view is that when (and only when) relationship-defining demands are flouted, full-blown blame responses are warranted. The idea is that this is best explanation of the difference in moral responses in ANNIVERSARY and CHEATING. A fuller defence of this claim would take us too far afield. For my purposes, the crux of the point is that being responsive to relationship-defining demands is a capacity that we should see as something over and above being a fit subject for moral responses generally. In other words, Shoemaker concludes, there are two different kinds of responsibility that go hand in hand with these two different kinds of capacity—accountability and attributability (we can understand the latter either in terms of answerability or mere attributability). While accountability requires responsiveness to relationship-defining demands, attributability merely requires that one's actions and attitudes "reflect" or express or stand in a rational relation to one's evaluative commitments.

[22] This is my terminology, not Shoemaker's.

The basic idea I am interested in is the idea that being accountable—being open to full-blown blame responses—is something over and above being attributable. In this way, there may be room to understand the natural reaction in terms of a notion of responsibility that does not imply blameworthiness, and thereby avoids the pitfalls of the (H) view. That said, so far it likely seems that drawing this distinction in the present context is merely an *ad hoc* way of opening up some conceptual space vis-à-vis the project of explaining the natural reaction. To further motivate the distinction independently of that project, then, it is worth looking briefly at Shoemaker's application of this distinction to a case that raises difficult questions for theories of moral responsibility—namely, the case of psychopaths.[23]

Shoemaker argues that psychopaths can be attributable but not accountable in at least some central cases. The reason why is that accountability, by virtue of its essentially social structure—recall, it is spelled out in terms of responsiveness to relationship-defining demands—implies certain capacities which the psychopath lacks. These are capacities to recognize the *reasons* implied by the relationship-defining demands at play in their relationships with others. As Gary Watson puts it (in a discussion of the case of psychopaths that shares significant similarities with Shoemaker's):

> [P]sychopathy (as I read the evidence) precisely involves an incapacity to recognize the interests of others as making any valid claims on them. Consequently, they are disabled from standing in the reciprocal relations or (to use another idiom) from engaging in the mutual recognition that lies at the core of moral life. In John Rawls's sense, they lack the features of moral personality: a sense of justice and a conception of the good (Watson 2011, p.307).

By appeal to an "ought implies can" principle, Shoemaker argues that the psychopath cannot be held accountable for her actions and attitudes (importantly, Shoemaker means *morally* accountable – he claims that there is no reason why we cannot stand in other kinds of *non-moral* relationships with psychopaths, such as an "aesthetic relation" or "fellow citizenry relation," and thereby hold the psychopath accountable in these non-moral arenas).[24] This is because the psychopath lacks the relevant capacities required in order to do so. Nevertheless, we can still understand the psychopath as responsible in the sense of attributable. The psychopath's actions and attitudes are rationally connected to his evaluative commitments, they are expressions of his self qua agent.

Imagine a psychopath who cheats an elderly woman of out her life savings. If Shoemaker is right, the psychopath is not *accountable* for this action. The psychopath is insensitive to the key moral relationship-defining demand that he be sensitive to the elderly woman's interests.[25] Thus, Shoemaker claims that

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[23] I rely on Watson's (2011) characterization of the psychopathic profile: "Psychopaths (as such) suffer no psychoses or notable neuroses, or general deficits of intelligence. Their condition is characterized by callous interpersonal relations, lack of significant attachment to other people or institutions (shallow and fleeting "friendships," amorous relations, and loyalties), lack of a sense of shame and guilt, lack of self-criticism, refusal to take responsibility for the troubles caused to others or oneself, and lack of sincere commitment to long-term goals. Psychopathy is present from childhood and, by all indications, endures a lifetime. As this description implies, this condition has proven unamenable to psychopharmacological or psychological therapies and treatments" (Watson 2011, p. 308).

[24] Shoemaker's key point is that psychopaths are incapable of recognizing *moral* relationship-defining standards, recognition of which is necessary (according to Shoemaker) for an agent to be held morally accountable.

[25]The point is not that the psychopath cannot understand that some moral relationship-defining demand applies to him. The point is that the psychopath is incapable of seeing that the demand is reason-giving. "Let me be clear: the psychopath may well understand that there is a demand being made of him; what he cannot understand is that the demand is reason-giving. There are facts being presented to him that he judges irrelevant—"Yes, I understand that

"The kind of moral address involved in holding someone accountable is thus pointless with respect to the psychopath" (Shoemaker 2011, p.629). This explains why there is a good case to be made that the psychopath is not an appropriate target of blame. This is not to say that blame wouldn't be *understandable* in such a case (i.e. it's understandable that, for example, the elderly woman would blame the psychopath). The point is that blame would be *unreasonable.*[26] Nevertheless, it is intuitive to treat the psychopath as morally responsible for this action. And the notion of responsibility Shoemaker thinks is appropriate for this case is attributability.

Notice that it is also plausible to regard the psychopath's action as violating some moral requirement. The psychopath does something wrong in cheating the elderly woman out of her life savings. This is a case, then, in which blameworthiness and a violation of normative requirements plausibly come apart. In other words, it is another case like Srinivasan's case of the political leader above. It seems like a counterexample to the following claim:

> S ought not to have cheated the elderly woman out of her life savings only if, if S did cheat the elderly woman out of her life savings, then S is blameworthy for cheating the elderly woman out of her life savings.

What is important about this case is that it is still a case of attributability. This motivates a view about the nature of normative requirements that is different, but closely related to the (H) view. We can put it in the form of the following principle. Call it the "attributability principle" (A):

> (A): S ought to Ø only if, if S doesn't Ø, then S is attributability-responsibile for not Ø-ing

The idea is that attributability, as opposed to blameworthiness, is central to the notion of a normative requirement. What (A) says is that it's only true that S is normatively required to Ø if, were they not to Ø, they would be attributability-responsible for not Ø-ing. (A) seems to avoid some of the implausible implications of (H). For example, the psychopath case is not a counterexample to the following claim:

> S ought not to have cheated the elderly woman out of her life savings only if, if S did cheat the elderly woman out of her life savings, then S is attributability-responsible for cheating the elderly woman out of her life savings.

This is simply because, as I've said, we can allow that the psychopath *is* attributability-responsible for his action in the case. And I think the same can be said of the political leader case. That is, while that case functions as a counterexample to the (H) principle, it does not function as a counterexample to the (A) principle. The political leader is plausibly attributability-responsible for leading his country into a materially devastating war. So, as far as the (A) principle is concerned, there is nothing amiss with the idea that something has gone horribly morally wrong for him.

But more positively, the plausibility of the (A) principle is derived from the plausibility of the basic idea that we make normative demands on the actions and attitudes of *persons* or *agents.* We don't make

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when I do this you will be in pain and you won't like it," he says, "but so what?"—so they simply fail to constitute any sort of constraint on his deliberations or motivations (Shoemaker 2011, p.629).

[26] Talbert (2008) makes this distinction.

normative demands, for example, on inanimate objects or the mechanical proceedings of nature. The domain of normative requirements does not extend beyond the actions and attitudes of persons (perhaps it extends to *persons* themselves (i.e. assessments of one's character)). Of course, we do "attribute" things to inanimate objects and to the proceedings of nature. And we use the language of "responsibility" to do so. To return to an example above, it's perfectly intelligible to say that the avalanche was responsible for the destruction of the ski lodge. Note, however, that it's not plausible to understand this in terms of attributability as I've outlined that notion. Rather, what is plausible is that the avalanche is causally responsible for the destruction of the ski lodge.[27] And this (the fact that it is *merely* causally responsible) is at least one reason why we would not say that the avalanche violated some normative requirement by destroying the ski lodge.

7. Attributability and Access

To illustrate the basic point so far, consider another case:

> DUMMIES: Susan is driving in an obstacle course full of life-like dummies, and her objective is to run all of the dummies over. She has been led to believe that it is just a game and there are no real people on the obstacle course. Unbeknownst to Susan, however, a real person has snuck onto the course and in the process of doing her best to succeed in the game Susan runs the person over.

Not only is Susan not morally blameworthy (she does not seem to be the appropriate subject of reactive attitudes or sanctions), Susan is not even attributability-responsible for running a real person over (where the event is to be understood under that description).[28] The fact that Susan runs a real person over is not rationally related to her evaluative commitments (whatever they are). As such, we would not adjust our assessment of Susan's character, make decisions about the kinds of plans we would make with her, or become less inclined to associate with her on the basis of this event.

It is natural to wonder just why Susan is not attributability-responsible for running the real person over in this case. I think the most plausible explanation is that attributability—like blameworthiness—implies some kind of epistemic access. Many philosophers find it highly plausible that norm violation can occur in ignorance. But, as I've noted, equally many find it implausible that blameworthiness works the same way. Again, appeals to excuses in certain contexts highlight this fact. Non-culpable *ignorance* is often (though not always) a paradigm excuse or exculpation from blame. The thought here, then, is that attributability-responsibility is enough like being open to blame in this respect. It comes with a kind of condition of accessibility. The fact that there is a real person on the obstacle course is inaccessible to Susan in the relevant sort of way. The idea is that this explains why Susan is not attributability-responsible for running the real person over.

It's not clear exactly how the condition of accessibility should be spelled out. For a start, we might say:

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[27] To be sure, I wouldn't be able to say much if someone put pressure on me to explain exactly what the difference is. My first response would be to say that the avalanche does not express any evaluative commitments, or manifest an agential self in destroying the ski lodge. It doesn't *have* any evaluative commitments or an agential self. Of course, in the context of someone pressing me on this issue, these sorts of notions are exactly what we'll want to know a lot more about. See Gibbons (2013, Ch.6) for an interesting discussion of some of the difficulties in this area.

[28] More on this point about the description shortly.

> Necessarily, an agent is attributability-responsible for Φ-ing only if they are in a position to know that they are Φ-ing.

Note that the condition is not that the agent must *know* that they are Φ-ing. There is of course a big difference between knowing and *being in a position to know*. For example, one can fail to know that they are Φ-ing where it would be appropriate to say, "they *should have known.*" If one is not even in a *position* to know, it's far less clear there is any sense to the claim that they should have known. After all, knowing is not something the agent is in a position to do. That said, a good articulation of the accessibility condition will also need to add that an agent can of course fail to be in a position to know when they ought to have been in a position to know. For example, doctors are obligated to read about the latest important findings in their area. Now imagine a GP who doesn't bother, and so ends up making an error that kills a patient. The doctor was not in a position to know that what she was doing was an error (according to the latest findings), but she ought to have been in a position to know.[29] So perhaps the access condition should go:

> Necessarily, an agent is attributability-responsible for Φ-ing only if they are in a position to know that they are Φ-ing (and they have not culpably failed to put themselves in a position to know that they are Φ-ing).

There are no doubt further refinements we could make to such a condition. But the basic idea is that if S is not in a position to know that they are Φ-ing (and they have not culpably failed to put themselves in a position to know), it's not at all clear that their Φ-ing bears a rational relation to their evaluative commitments. Again, this seems like the best explanation of why Susan is not attributability-responsible for running a real person over.

Since attributability is understood in terms of actions or attitudes that bear a rational relation to the agent's evaluative commitments, it is also natural to ask: What does the accessibility condition on attributability imply about an agent's self-knowledge? That is, what does it imply about the agent's knowledge of their own evaluative commitments? One might worry that, if it involves the idea that agents must know what their evaluative commitments are in order to for their Φ-ing to stand in a rational relation to those commitments (and thus for them to be in the market for counting as attributability-responsible for Φ-ing), agents will fail to count as responsible in a large number of cases in which they intuitively are. After all, our evaluative commitments are sometimes (likely often) opaque to us (consider cases of denial or repression).

However, there is a clear distinction between an agent's having the right kind of access to the conditions under which they count as Φ-ing, and an agent's having access to what their evaluative commitments are. The accessibility condition on attributability does not imply that agents must be in a position to know what their evaluative commitments are in order to be attributability-responsible for Φ-ing (perhaps something like that is required for *answerability*). All the accessibility condition on attributability says is that the agent must have the right kind of access to the conditions under which they count as Φ-ing, in order for their Φ-ing to stand in a rational relation to the agent's evaluative commitments, or manifest their agential self.

[29] Thanks to Duncan Pritchard for this example.

There is also an interesting question about the description under which the action or attitudes of an agent count as attributable to them. For example, let's say for sake of argument that Susan is attributability-responsible for running *something* over. How do we decide what to count as the appropriate description of an action or attitude that an agent is attributability-responsible for? It is plausible that Susan is attributability-responsible for running something over that looks just like a dummy. It is far less plausible that Susan is attributability-responsible for running a real person over (*qua* real person). What explains the difference? I think the best explanation is that Susan does not have the right kind of access to the fact that she is running a real person over. Judgments about the descriptions under which actions or attitudes count as attributable to agents are nicely explained by the accessibility condition on attributability.

8. The Attributability View

Taking the access condition on attributability together with (A), we get the result that when an agent is not in a position to know that they are Ø-ing, this undermines the judgment that in Ø-ing the agent violates some normative requirement. The suggestion, then, is that (A) and the accessibility condition on attributability are at least two of the commitments underlying the natural reaction. We can quickly see the account in action by returning to the BIV case. The BIV is not in a position to know that she fails to proportion her beliefs to what she knows (when she believes, say, that she has hands). Thus according to the accessibility condition, the BIV's failure to proportion her beliefs to what she knows is not something that is attributable to her. And because the BIV's failure to proportion her beliefs to what she knows is not attributable to her, according to the (A) principle this undermines the judgment that she violates a normative requirement in so doing. So we can see that the proposal provides an explanation of what underlies the natural reaction to E=K. And the proposal of course generalizes. That is to say, any view that implies that an agent can be normatively required to Ø when they are not in a position to know that they are normatively required to Ø will conflict with (A) and the accessibility condition on attributability. This way of underwriting the natural reaction implies that anyone who endorses such a view owes an account of what is wrong with the (A) principle or the accessibility condition on attributability, or both. That is what accounting for the natural reaction amounts to.

I do not suggest that we ought to endorse the natural reaction. Rather, my aim has been to provide an account of the natural reaction that makes either endorsing it or explaining it away look important. So why might the Attributability View make this look important, exactly? For starters, I said above that the weaker the commitments underlying the natural reaction are, the harder it will be to explain it away. It is worth pointing out, then, that (A) is a weaker thesis than (H), at least in the sense that it involves a much weaker sense of responsibility. That is, (H) turns on considerations of what it takes to be *blameworthy.* I've agreed with Shoemaker that this is something over and above what it takes to be attributability-responsible. The minimal condition on an action or attitude being attributable to an agent is that the action or attitude bears a rational connection to the agent's evaluative commitments. It has nothing to do with an agent's being responsive to standards governing their relationships with others. It is relatively easy to imagine cases of agents violating normative requirements via actions or attitudes that do not also violate any standards governing their relationships with others. But it is difficult to imagine cases of agents violating normative requirements via actions or attitudes that do not bear a rational relation to the agent *qua agent* (i.e. to their evaluative commitments).

Another important point is that on the present view, excuses are possible. I noted above that one way of putting what the proponent of the (H) view has in mind is that the presence of an excusing condition serves to undermine the judgment that a normative requirement has been violated. Having an excuse *just means* that one's action or attitude fails to violate the relevant norm(s). One way of putting the present proposal is to say that, not just any sort of excusing condition, but rather a particular kind of excusing condition serves to undermine the judgment that normative requirements are violated. In particular, when an excusing condition is such that the agent no longer counts as attributability-responsible for some action or attitude, this undermines the judgment that an action or attitude violates a normative requirement. Under such conditions, the relevant action or attitude no longer counts as an expression of the agent's self *qua* agent (does not bear a rational relation to the agent's evaluative commitments). In this way, when Williamson appeals to the idea that the BIV is unjustified but nevertheless *excused* for believing that she has hands, we are not forced to reply with a proposal that effectively eliminates the possibility of excuses altogether. We can agree with Williamson that there are of course cases of agent's violating normative requirements and being excused for it (the political leader; the psychopath). However, we can maintain that his appeal to excuses in the BIV case is not helpful, because that is a case in which the excusing condition is such that the agent does not count as attributability-responsible for failing to proportion her beliefs to what she knows.

Another compelling feature of the view arises in the context of a related discussion, which I can only touch on briefly here. It concerns a distinction between what is sometimes called "factual ignorance" and "evaluative ignorance", and the relevance this has for judgments about culpability. Consider the following case:

> 50s FATHER: Suppose Don is your typical television father from the late 50s or early 60s. He loves his children and does what he can to try to keep them happy. He puts money away for his son to go to school. He puts money away for a sailboat for his daughter. Although his daughter has said repeatedly that she wants to go to school, he sees no reason to help her because he sees no reason for women to go to college (Littlejohn 2014, p.144).

Clayton Littlejohn plausibly says that Don ought to have saved for his daughter's education. And he maintains this is so, even though Don had no evidence that would rationally support the belief that he ought to do so (that is to say, even though he is "evaluatively ignorant"). Littlejohn and others argue that there is an asymmetry between the appropriateness of blame in cases of evaluative versus factual ignorance. They think, in addition to violating normative requirements, agents in cases like 50s FATHER can even be the appropriate subjects of blame – despite being evaluatively ignorant. "Because Don shouldn't act like a sexist and his sexism isn't an excuse for his wrongdoing, he's culpable for his wrongful behaviour" (Littlejohn 2014, p. 144). And Littlejohn argues that this leads to problems for those who think, for example, that the BIV is not merely excused but *justified* in believing that *p* despite factual ignorance. How can factual ignorance justify while evaluative ignorance sometimes doesn't even excuse?

This is an enormously complex issue worth exploring in much more detail. I will simply suggest here that the Attributability View gets the right results in this new sort of case. That is, Don is attributable for failing to save for his daughter's education. This is because his decision to not save for his daughter's education bears a rational connection to his evaluative commitments. So it is consistent with the view to maintain that he violates a normative requirement in so doing (the view leaves it open whether or not Don is blameworthy). More generally, the Attributability View will allow that actions arising out of evaluative

ignorance can be attributable to the agent, while actions arising out of factual ignorance cannot—or rather, those cases that violate the condition of accessibility on attributability I put forward in Section Seven cannot.

9. Conclusion

I've examined three potential ways of spelling out Gibbons' claim that there is a natural reaction to the general idea that one can be normatively required to Ø when that requirement is in some sense outside of one's first person perspective or inaccessible to one. The paper had two main aims. One was to make the natural reaction look like something that needs to be accounted for. The other was to offer a clear and explicit explanation of precisely *what* that means. Accounting for the natural reaction means doing one of two things. One can endorse a view of normativity according to which people are always in a position to know what their normative requirements are. Or, one can reject (A) or the accessibility condition on attributability (or both), and explain away their intuitive plausibility. Concerning the first option, Williamson of course thinks there can be no such view of normativity.[30] Thus, he would take the second route. Perhaps the majority would follow him. I hope to have made enough of a case for the Attributability View to make this seem like an interesting project.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Fernando Broncano-Berrocal, Allan Hazlett, Chris Kelp, Sebastian Köhler, Aidan McGlynn, Ram Neta, Duncan Pritchard, Mona Simion for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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[30] As I noted earlier, this is because he argues there are no (non-trivial) luminous conditions (Williamson 2000).

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